

Introduction:

- New Series: Beyond the Stable. I was given a Christmas card in college by a fellow classmate who was majoring in religion. He was also an accomplished artist too. He gave me a Christmas card. On the front was a silhouette of Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus in a manger. The headline read: *His Love...* When you opened the card you saw a silhouette of three crosses and Jesus on the center one. The headline read *...went beyond the stable*. "His love...went beyond the stable." It must have made an impact because it has been with me all of these years. Thus the series: Beyond the stable.
- It is easy to get caught up in all the 'stuff' that contemporary Christmas offers: Lights, presents, food, decorated trees, Christmas songs, Hallmark, etc. As Christians we have to be intentional about Christmas. One of the ways we can do that is to intentionally look beyond the stable.
- As I have read the Christmas account through the years I have always been captivated by the prophecies of the birth of Christ found in the OT, the actual story/fulfillment of those prophecies, and how the Word of God given to us gives us direction. IE. Can you imagine what conversation would sound like if you put Jeremiah and Isaiah the prophets in a room with the priest Zechariah, Joseph, father of Jesus, and you and I. We would have three different perspectives all sounding off. We would have: foresight-the prophets, insight-main characters and hind sight-you and I all taking place at once. I am amazed at the foresight of the prophets the insight of those who are walking the word out and hindsight that we have. It should stand to reason that we have the better edge in applying the truth we find in the Christmas story. What is it that we are to see beyond the stable?
- Let's start with the main point this morning...Beyond the stable. We do not want to be stuck in the stable at Christmas. But we do want to celebrate the birth of Christ.

I. Foresight, Insight, Hindsight - Positions of perspective and states of awareness.

A. Defined from Merriam Webster. They are positions of perspective and they affect what and how we see.

1. Foresight is the act or power of foreseeing. In advance of... ie. The prophets: Is. Jeremiah, Malachi, Zechariah etc. The wisemen. They were seeing what was ahead from a distance. Oh, that God would give us the ability to see ahead from a distance. ie. The angels to Marry and Joseph, and Zechariah
2. Insight is the power or act of seeing into a situation or discernment. In the midst of... priests and teachers of religious law (Mt 2:2), who know the Word, respond to Herod. Simeon and Anna - this is the one! Oh to be able to see and recognize God when He is moving in our midst.
3. Hindsight is the power of perceiving after an event has happened. After the fact of... Apostle Paul, the 12 after the resurrection and especially after Pentecost. Oh to apply the word to our lives daily as we meditate upon its Truth.

4. I believe we have to approach the Christmas story with all three in mind. As we do, discovery can be made that will help us understand and apply truths found in it.
 5. Many in the church approach the Christmas story like a Hallmark movie: Same story line different setting. Same problems, same answers, different people. Saw it last year...Boring.
- B. State of awareness
1. Foresight - sees into the future – what matters next. Has to do with preparation.
 2. Insight - looks at what is now – what matters now. Has to do with what is happening now. Can prevent bad decisions from being made and actions that we will regret later. Ie. As the second advent of Christ approaches.
 3. Hindsight - looks back to the past – what actually mattered/significance (notable worth). This is who we are with the scriptures we are looking back. We look at what happened and ask how we can apply truth to our circumstance.
 - a) Three types of hind sight people:
 - (1) Armchair quarterback – “here is what I would have done.” Ie. Obstacle course at urban air. Looks easy on TV.
 - (2) Commentating quarterback – just makes comments at the time.
 - (3) Actual quarterback - Game review films – for the purpose of learning. This is the one we want to be. We review for the purpose of understanding, learning, and applying.

II. Hope... Beyond The Stable

- A. If there is one thing about the coming of Christ that happens in the Christmas story it is Hope!
1. The root of the Hebrew word for hope means – *“To wait or to look for with eager expectation. Waiting with steadfast endurance is a great expression of faith. It means enduring patiently in confident hope that God will decisively act for the salvation of his people.”*¹
 2. Hope is expectation of the good. It is grounded on trust with a yearning from the heart. It is the starting point from which faith extends. *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”* (Hebrews 11:1, ESV)
 3. Without hope, most things slowly come to a halt or cease altogether. Hope is a powerful force in the earth and in the hearts of men! Ie. Simeon, Anna,
 - a) A person with hope overcomes, outlasts, and springs forth into the future!

¹ Hartley, J. E. (1999). [1994](#). R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed., p. 791). Chicago: Moody Press.

- b) Take hope away and a person dries up... *"Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off."* (Ezekiel 37:11, ESV) Take hope away and people become discouraged, depressed and lifeless. Their life becomes dark. They are merely surviving if that. We were created to live! A person with hope lives!
- B. Hope is the first part of Advent! Hope is having confidence in the future! It is the expectation of good based on God's gracious promises to us. Hope is a feeling that what is wanted can be had so it looks forward with desire and confidence. This is actually the understanding of the NT word hope.
1. The composition of the NT word for hope, means to watch something with the head turned away from all other objects or things. It ignores all other interests and stains forward to something you fully expect.
 2. We are back to Heb 11:1 *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."*
- C. The major result of hope is the ability to wait in the midst of difficulty. Hope is given through God's Word.
1. The first candle of advent is called the candle of prophecy (foresight) or the candle of hope. For those of you who do the advent wreath, tonight you will light the first candle, the candle of hope. Jesus has already come as the sacrificial Lamb but He is yet to come as Triumphant King!
 2. Advent scripture readings are meant to give us hope. Lk 1:79, Mt 4:16 *Those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death have seen a great light!*
 3. Our hope comes from God! Just as the hope filled Christmas story abounds with hope that came from God. *"And again Isaiah says, 'The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.'" May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*" (Romans 15:12-13, ESV)
- D. *"Prophecy is one of the greatest tools of love we have as believers. It is the technology of heaven that accelerates relationship and creates connection with people. It helps us to live with a connection to how God feels and what He thinks."*² Kris Vallotton of Bethel Church says, "He who gives the most hope will have the greatest influence."

III. Our Hope Begins With Jesus

- A. The ancients looked forward to the coming Messiah, Jesus, the Christ, the Anointed One. The prophets spoke so clearly of Him with passion and desire that it caused a nation to long for Him. Jesus is the Son of God and God is the source of hope for His people. Jer. 29:11 God promises us a hope and a future!

² Shaw Bolz

1. If you have lost hope in life I encourage you, become a wise man and seek Him. When you find Him you will find hope!
 2. Christmas is about God giving the gift of life to a people who were spiritually dead.
- B. Jesus is our hope. Just as the ancients looked forward to His arrival, we look to Him daily for our hope and we look for His return as promised! They killed Him but on the third day He arose from the dead! There is hope beyond the stable!!!
1. Jesus open our eyes to see you! *"to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness."* (Isaiah 42:7, ESV)
 2. *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone."* (Isaiah 9:2, ESV)
 3. *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord."* (Jeremiah 17:7, ESV)
 4. *"he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior;"* (Titus 3:5-6, ESV)
- C. Jesus supplies our hope!
1. *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men."* (John 1:4, ESV)
 2. *"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world."* (John 1:9, ESV)
 3. Sin is referred to in scripture as darkness, because darkness has to do with the absence of light. Those who die without Christ are cast into outer darkness – a place without God where everything that is not of God is thrown. That is what makes darkness so tormenting.
- D. Jesus is the Word
1. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* (John 1:1, ESV)
 2. Ps 119:105 The Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Hope!
 3. Ps. 119:130 God's Word gives light and understanding.
 4. Light gives hope!

Conclusion:

- What is it that we are to see beyond the stable? HOPE!!!
- "The school system in a large city had a program to help children keep up with their school work during stays in the city's hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child. She took the child's name and room number and talked briefly with the child's regular class teacher. "We're

studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," the regular teacher said, "and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them so he doesn't fall too far behind." The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain. Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left she felt she hadn't accomplished much. But the next day, a nurse asked her, "What did you do to that boy?" The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. "No, no," said the nurse. "You don't know what I mean. We've been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He's fighting back, responding to treatment. It's as though he's decided to live." Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization: "They wouldn't send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?" Folks, God would not have sent his son to a dying world if He knew they could not live, would He?

- If you have been burned in life, I want you to know this morning one was sent to give you life and give you hope.
- There is still hope to be found beyond the Stable.
 - The same Christ, the Shepherd's, and Wisemen found hope in; Is the same Christ people still find hope in today.

Advent readings.

- Advent starts tonight, it is the season when we prepare ourselves to receive God's gift of Jesus. It is a time of "getting ready" for the celebration of Christmas. Hope, Peace, Joy, Love. Advent is a time when we yearn for Jesus to come back to completely remake all things as the returning King. The cry of Advent is of those who have experienced injustice in the world under the curse of sin and yet who have hope of deliverance from the God who hears and is not silent. Hanukkah also starts tonight! Hanukkah / Festival of lights. means dedication. Lighting of the Menorah. *"Let's declare the 'oil' of our anointing will grow and produce a brightness of His glory that shines throughout this holiday season."* ~ Chuck Pierce."

1. Day One: Isa 9:1-7
2. Day Two: Jer 33:14-16
3. Day Three: Isa 111:1-5
4. Day Four: Isa 6:1-10; John 12:34-43
5. Day Five: Ezk 34:11-16; Mark 6:30-44; Jn 1:11-18
6. Day Six: Jer 29:10-14
7. Day Seven: Isa 62:6-12
8. Day Eight: Zephaniah 3:14-17
9. Day Nine: Isa 60:1-9
10. Day Ten: Isa 52:7-10
11. Day Eleven: Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:5-25
12. Day Twelve: Luke 1:57-80
13. Day Thirteen: Luke 1:26-56
14. Day Fourteen: Micah 5:2-5
15. Day Fifteen: Isa 11:6-10
16. Day Sixteen: Mark 13:32-37
17. Day Seventeen: Mt 25:1-13
18. Day Eighteen: Luke 21:25-36
19. Day Nineteen: John 12:20-36
20. Day Twenty: Titus 2:11-14
21. Day Twenty-one: Psalm 96:1-13
22. Day Twenty-two: Matthew 1:18-25
23. Day Twenty-three: Luke 2:1-20; Isa 52:7-10
24. Day Twenty-four: John 3:16-21; Romans 5:6-11; Eph 2:1-10
25. Day Twenty-five: Luke 2:1-20